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ABSTRACT

This bibliography, intended for teachers of grades 7 and 8, presents 52 annotated literature sources and lists an additional 49 non-annotated sources by and about black Americans. The entries can be used to supplement assigned literature anthologies. Themes or catagories offered (with representations from various genres) are (1) "Black Pioneers and Leaders Worth Knowing," (2) "Who Am I?" (3) "Sports and Adventures," (4) "Shades of Humor," (5) "Black Historty Through Poetry," (6) "Songs to Steer by," and (7) "Celebrating Christmas." (MF)

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BLACK LITERATURE FOR YOUNG READERS

An Annotated Bibliography of Literature By and About Black Americans for Seventh and Eighth Grade Students

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TE 002 222

Division of Curriculum
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Louisville, Kentucky

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BLACK LITERATURE FOR YOUNG READERS

Grades 7 and 8

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BLACK LITERATURE FOR YOUNG READERS

An Annotated Bibliography of Literature By and About Black Americans for Seventh and Eighth Grade Students

This annotated bibliography has been prepared for use by English teachers of the seventh and eighth grades. It can be used as a supplement to the assigned literature anthology.

It is hoped that this bibliography will serve a two-fold purpose. Many young black students are not aware of the wealth of literature black writers have produced. This bibliography will introduce them to this material, and hopefully it will inspire those with creative talents to develop them. Many young white students have been deprived of a well-balanced interpretation of American history and culture. By reading some of the materials suggested here, it is hoped that they will have a more intelligent grasp of the multi-ethnic make-up of the American culture.

Modern young people are demanding the truth about themselves and their society. Information and insights gained by reading some of these selections will perhaps help prepare them for coping with the difficult problems of contemporary life.

Complete bibliographical data follow each section.

UNIT ONE

BLACK PIONEERS AND LEADERS WORTH KNOWING

The aim of this section is to familiarize students with the lives and accomplishments of some outstanding black pioneers and leaders in various fields.

Another aim is to acquaint students with the actual writings of these persons and to show that not only through their words and actions but also through the written word they were able to exert wide-ranging influence over others.

The teacher can find many ways to use this bibliography. For example, the two editorials by Frederick Douglass are rich with imagery. The students might wish to discuss vocabulary, point of view, and some of the other literary devices used. The study of the history of black newspapers in America and the writing of editorials might also be attempted.

Reading Martin Luther King, Jr.'s account of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott could lead into a study and discussion of the non-violent techniques of Gandhi and Thoreau.

The contributions of black scientists despite their efforts to educate themselves under adverse conditions may be pointed out to the students. A study or an evaluation of some of the educational problems being experienced by young people today could lead to interesting discussions.

"The North Star Shall Live,"
Two editorials by Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass, a great orator and writer in the cause of freedom for the slaves, purchased his own freedom for $750 in 1846. He felt that he could further the abolitionist movement by editing a militant newspaper which he called The North Star. From his headquarters in Rochester, New York, he also operated a station on the Underground Railroad, along with the Quaker, Susan B. Anthony.

The two editorials, "To Our Friends and Fellow-Laborers" addressed to white abolitionists, and "To Our Oppressed Countrymen" addressed to black men, appeared in the original issue of The North Star and should be of great interest to young people because some of the issues raised in these editorials are still of primary concern to Americans today.

"Black Men, You Shall Be Great Again"
by Marcus Garvey

Marcus Garvey, a heavy-set black Jamaican, came to Harlem, New York, in 1916. Shocked at the conditions he saw there, he was able to win the black masses with his message of pride in their race. He felt that the black man's only hope to better his living conditions was to build an independent nation in Africa. His dream failed, but his movement was the first real mass movement of American Negroes. The article, "Black Men, You Shall Be Great Again,"is an example of his forceful style of writing and sets forth his beliefs.

"Last Will and Testament"
by Mary McLeod Bethune

This is a moving document with which all young people should be familiar. The author's will is bequeathed to Negroes everywhere in the hope that her philosophy might give them inspiration. The things she bequeaths are love, hope, thirst for education, faith, racial dignity, a desire to live harmoniously with one's fellow men, and a responsibility to young people—principles and policies that never grow old and which might be discussed in depth by junior high school students.

Mary McLeod Bethune devoted her life to improving the social and educational position of her fellow Negroes, particularly youth. Her biography will be especially interesting to junior high school boys and girls.

"March On Washington - 1942"
by A. Phillip Randolph

The early 1940's saw the Negro communities in a state of unrest. Negroes were resentful and frustrated by their treatment in the armed services and also by the fact that they were barred from jobs in defense industries. In January, 1941, A. Phillip Randolph, the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, planned a nonviolent march on Washington in order to get the government to do something about these problems. The President capitulated by setting up a Fair Employment Practices Commission. The nonviolent tactic proved effective and in later years was widely used. "March On Washington - 1942" spells out the demands of Randolph's movement.

"Bus Boycott - 1954"
by Martin Luther King, Jr.

The story of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott of 1955-1956 caused when Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to move to the Jim Crow section of the bus on which she was riding is told by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the account, he tells step by step what happened and relates how his thinking was shaped by the philosophies of Thoreau and Gandhi. The nonviolent technique which evolved from this boycott was copied all over the nation as a weapon for forcing changes in the economic and social structure of our country.

Negro Builders and Heroes
by Benjamin Brawley

Benjamin Brawley, who wrote Negro Builders and Heroes while a professor of English at Howard University, has presented a comprehensive book of biographies of blacks who were prominent in a wide range of endeavors. Outstanding heroes from the days of slave ships down to the present time have been included.

In the early chapters of his book, he writes mostly of one outstanding person, but the later chapters deal with several persons. He states that it is a sign of progress that in any line of work there are now so many persons to be considered.

Although copyrighted in 1937, this book is still in print, and it could be used by students as a handy reference to the early but little-known leaders who laid the ground work for much of the progress that has been made in the social, political, and economic life of the American Negro.

Black Pioneers of Science and Invention
by Louis Haber

Dr. Louis Haber, who has had a long career in science teaching, began working in 1966 to gather and present the information offered in this book. Many young people have heard a great deal about black leaders in the areas of education, civil rights, entertainment, and politics but very little about the scientific contributions of blacks. This book seeks to fill that void. It gives a highly readable but detailed account of men whose work had not previously received the recognition it deserves.

Many heretofore unknown but interesting facts are brought out in this book. Lewis Howard Latimer, a black scientist who worked closely with Thomas Edison, was also an accomplished poet. The expression,"It's the real McCoy," meaning perfection, originated from Elizah McCoy, a black who was the father of lubrication.

The First Book of American Negroes
by Margaret B. Young

The First Book of American Negroes contains less than one hundred pages, but is is filled with a wealth of material on outstanding black leaders and black culture as it is being experienced in America today. It is easy to read.

Margaret B. Young, the author, attempts to answer such questions as "What is a Negro?" and "What is a ghetto?" In the process of answering these questions, she writes about many aspects of the black man's world: education, employment, cultural contributions, and the civil rights movement.

Included in this book are many photographs of contemporary scenes: young children in Harlem sweeping the streets during a clean-up campaign, a Head-Start class in New Orleans, Harry Belefonte and Miriam Makeba receiving awards for best folk records. These pictures and the accompanying facts help to make this an exciting book for young people who like to know more about present-day black America.

The Meeting — A One-Act Play
by Peggy Adams Orsborn

"The Meeting," a one-act play, depicts the multi-ethnic makeup of our national heritage. Written by Peggy A. Orsborn, a Chicago elementary teacher, it is designed to be used primarily by junior high school students.

The book itself contains well-written instructions and simple illustrations for stage decorations, costuming, and rehearsals.

Peggy Orsborn has intended for her book to be used as a language arts learning device and writes that drama, as an instrument of expression, is an excellent means of providing instructional opportunity for development of these skills. She has included in her book an evaluation of a test performance of "The Meeting" that indicated the scope of knowledge gained by the participants. She says that it was evident that all the

communication skills, listening, reading, speaking, and writing, had been developed in varying degrees.

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UNIT TWO

WHO AM I?

This unit is composed of ten short stories, all dealing with young black children and some of the problems with which they are confronted in the growing-up process. In many of these stories, the young person is faced with making a decision that might affect his entire future. Growing up and finding one's self is difficult for all young people, but some of the problems faced by the children in these stories are peculiar only to blacks and other minority groups.

Since most students are taught the structure of a short story during the beginning year of junior high school, a thorough study of some of the settings and conflicts encountered in these short stories will do much to broaden all of the students' knowledge of the black experience. Also, encouraging the students to write about themselves and their problems or to exercise their creative talents by writing short stories and sketches could do much in helping them answer for themselves the question, "Who Am I?"

"Valedictorian"
by Richard Wright

This story is an excerpt from Richard Wright's autobiography, Black Boy. Wright was born on a plantation in Mississippi. His family had to move often as he grew up, and this made it difficult for him to get an education. He graduated with top honors from high school at the age of sixteen. His principal, thinking that Wright might say something to offend the white element in the community in the valedictory speech he was to deliver on graduation night, wrote the speech himself and gave it to Wright. The difficult decision Wright had to make because of the principal's action affected his entire life. "Valedictorian" is the short story of this incident in Wright's life.

"Thank You, Ma'm"
by Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes, the author of many books, short stories, and poems for all age groups, has written this story which many young teenagers, especially boys who live in large urban areas, may find very real.

Roger, a young boy, wanted some blue suede shoes. To get the money, he made the mistake of snatching the purse of a very large and strong-willed lady. How she met this attack and the effect her reaction had on Roger make interesting reading.

"The Boy Who Painted Christ Black"
by John Henrik Clarke

Aaron Crawford was the smartest boy in the Muskogee County School—for colored children. He had a variety of talents, but painting was the area in which he particularly excelled. For his teacher's birthday, which fell about a week before Christmas, he painted a picture that created an uproar and a turning point at the Muskogee County School. The picture he painted and the repercussions from it could be the topic for a debate or a panel discussion among students.

"Junkie Joe Had Some Money"
by Ronald Milner

Ronald Milner, born in Detroit in 1938, has received two literary grants, the John Hay Whitney Fellowship and a Rockefeller Fellowship. He has had a one-act play, "Life Agony," produced in Detroit and a full-length drama done on television.

In his short story "Junkie Joe Had Some Money," a little twelve-year-old boy has witnessed the murder of a poor old junkman. The neighborhood roughs who commit the murder warn him about what will happen to him if they are ever caught. The inner turmoil caused by his dilemma is responsible for some unusual occurrences in his life.

"One Friday Morning"
by Langston Hughes

"One Friday Morning" is the story of Nancy Lee. Talented in many ways but especially outstanding in art and as a member of the senior art class at George Washington High, she felt sure of winning the annual Artist Club Scholarship. The fact that she was practically the only black student in a white high school made little difference to Nancy, as she liked her classmates and was well liked in return. When she won the scholarship but was disqualified because of her color, she could hardly cope with the situation. How a wise and understanding

white counselor helped her through this unfortunate experience forms the core of this story. This could cause many young people to think more seriously about their personal relationship with those of other races.

"Salvation"
by Langston Hughes

After sitting on the mourners' bench with the other little sinners, Langston Hughes as a thirteen-year-old boy decided it would be better for all concerned if he accepted "salvation." The last hold-out had whispered, "God damn! I'm tired o' sitting here. Let's get up and be saved." Langston had given in, but the consequences were not very pleasant.

This could be a thought-provoking story for those young people who are always willing to follow the crowd without thinking about the significance of their acts.

"Marihuana and a Pistol"
by Chester B. Himes

If any of the students who read this unusual short story have ever taken dope, they will probably be able to understand or at least sympathize with what "Red" Caldwell does and with what happens to him while he is under the influence of two "weeds."

This is not a pretty story, but the author doesn't intend for it to be. The author of several books, he also wrote the hard-hitting novel, Cotton Comes to Harlem, which has been made into a successful movie.

"See How They Run"
by Mary Elizabeth Vroman

Many teachers will see themselves and some of their students in this touching short story, "See How They Run," about a young black teacher and her forty-two active students. Written from a teacher's point of view, young people reading it will get some idea of the problems, frustrations, and rewards experienced by teachers.

Two of Mary Elizabeth Vroman's short stories, this one and "And Have Not Charity," were published in Ladies Home Journal. "See How They Run" was purchased by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and released in 1953 as the movie, "Bright Road."

Lonesome Boy
by Arna W. Bontemps

Arna Bontemps, who has written poetry, fiction, essays, and children's books, is also the editor of several anthologies. Among his works are The Story of the Negro, One Hundred Years of Negro Freedom, Frederick Douglass: Slave Fighter and Freedman, and Any Place But Here.

Lonesome Boy, written especially for young people, is the story of a very young boy who left the country to go to a large city to follow a musical career. His grandfather cautioned him against leaving home at such an early age. Some unpleasant and perplexing experiences in the city decreased the generation gap between him and his grandfather. He eventually came around to his grandfather's point of view.

There is a supernatural element involved in this story; and for those who enjoy a mystery, this book will be ideal reading.

Black Misery
by Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes' little book should be read by all American children, black and white. It should be read by black children because it lets them know that many of the small things that make them miserable are also the cause of misery and embarrassment to many other blacks. Black Misery should be read by white children to awaken an awareness in them that black children,too, have feelings and are sensitive in many areas.

Hughes' work, wry, satirical, and humorous all at the same time, shows the reader how it feels to grow up in black America.

An extremely short work, some of the sayings that make this such a delightful work are "Misery is when you start to help an old white lady across the street and she thinks you're trying to snatch her purse" or "Misery is when the colored actor on the late, late show bucks his eyes at the wind shaking the shutters as if he really believes in ghosts."

After reading this book, students might wish to try their hand at self expression, using such take-offs as "Anger is . . . . . ." or "Happiness is . . . . . "

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UNIT THREE

SPORTS AND ADVENTURE

In this unit, Sports and Adventure, some of the black sports figures and adventurers are well known, and the student will be familiar with what they have done. Others, although their deeds are just as exciting and their impact on the lives of all Americans, black and white, just as memorable, have not had their dramas publicized.

By reading the books recommended for this unit, the young reader will become familiar with excitement, danger, and conflict that sports and high adventure offer. Many young people are not aware of the role blacks played as explorers in the discovery of America, the part they played during the Revolutionary War, or at a later period, the daring and courageous part blacks played in the settling of the West.

All of the books included here are autobiographical and describe in detail the fears, hopes, and dreams of the hero, or else they are narratives written by blacks who have gone to considerable lengths to give accurate and reliable accounts of the heroic contributions made by many blacks to the history and culture of the United States.

Nat Turner
by Judith Berry Griffin

Nat Turner, a biography written especially for young readers, is an interesting account of the rebellious slave, Nat Turner, and the times in which he lived. Judith Berry Griffin, the author, is a third grade teacher at Virginia Road Elementary School in North White Plains, New York.

Mrs. Griffin has written her account in a very clear and simple manner. Accustomed to working with young people, she has written as if she were talking directly to them, and begins her story by writing "To the Boys and Girls Who Will Read This Book."

In her book, she makes much of the fact that although Nat was a slave, he was determined to learn how to read. It was from his reading that the idea of freedom grew in his mind and ultimately led to his famed rebellion.

The Adventures of the Negro Cowboys
by Phillip Durham and Everett L. Jones

Phillip Durham and Everett Jones, collaborators on the book for young readers, The Adventures of the Negro Cowboys, also wrote a longer and more scholarly account called The Negro Cowboys, which contains the sources and references for the shorter work.

The Adventures of the Negro Cowboys tells about the more than five thousand Negro cowboys who rode north from Texas during the years immediately after the Civil War. By reading this story, young readers will gain new insight into the building of our western frontiers.

A Black Explorer at the North Pole
by Matthew A. Henson

This novel is an autobiographical report by the Negro who explored the North Pole with Admiral Robert E. Peary. Matthew Henson led a very exciting life; and although he left school at an early age, he became a very learned man of books and acquired skill in many areas. He had a long and thorough apprenticeship before his most exciting adventure at the North Pole.

This account of Henson's voyage to the North Pole tells about his long association with Admiral Robert E. Peary, the preparation for this long journey, the lives and customs of the Eskimo people, and the conquest of the pole. But most of all, this is a story of courage, loyalty, patience, and versatility under adverse conditions.

Famous Negro Heroes of America
by Langston Hughes

In this book from "Famous Biographies for Young People," the well-known author, Langston Hughes, presents a collection of sixteen biographies of famous American heroes from the past and present. Included in this collection are Esteban, discoverer of what is now Arizona, representing the past; and Brig. General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a contemporary military aviation hero. Also included are biographical sketches of black pioneers, warriors, abolitionists, and explorers.

These exciting stories as told by Hughes make the adventures of these black heroes live again for the reader.

Breakthrough to the Big League - The Story of Jackie Robinson
by Jackie Robinson and Alfred Duckett

Alfred Duckett, who collaborated with Jackie Robinson in the writing of this book, is well qualified for the job, as he is director of the Associated Negro Press and has a long list of journalistic achievements. This book tells of the courage and determination Jackie Robinson displayed in breaking down the "Jim Crow" barriers that had kept Negroes from playing in the big leagues. Young people take black athletes on the national scene for granted now, but they would probably enjoy reading this interesting account of a talented and strong baseball player who through determination and guts was able to break into and to make a big contribution to America's favorite sport.

Arthur Ashe - Tennis Champion
by Louie Robinson, Jr.

Louie Robinson, Jr., writer of fiction and nonfiction for such publications as Ebony, Jet, Negro Digest, and Tan, has written an interesting account about the outstanding career of young Arthur Ashe. It tells of the trials and triumphs of young Ashe before he reached the top in the world of tennis.

Included in the book are many pictures from the photo album of the Ashe family, Ebony Magazine, United Press International, Wide World Photos, and World Tennis Magazine. For those who might not wish to read the entire book, some individual chapters especially "The Start of Something Big" make interesting reading.

The Mets From Mobile - Cleon Jones and Tommie Agee
by A. S. "Doc" Young

A. S. "Doc" Young has produced hundreds of articles and columns and has headed up sports departments for Ebony, Jet, and Hue magazines and four of the leading Negro newspapers. He has also written several books.

This book has a very personal touch, as much of the information is based on interviews with both Jones and Agee. But there are also many hard facts, including statistical tables in the appendix. This book should prove quite enjoyable to baseball buffs.

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UNIT FOUR

SHADES OF HUMOR

Most literature anthologies contain a unit devoted to fun and laughter. A unit comprised of humorous stories, poems, anecdotes, jokes, etc., provides impetus for extensive work on oral communication. Some of this might take the form of telling impromptu stories and jokes, relating anecdotes, and narrating personal experiences.

To supplement the material in the students' anthology, the material suggested for use here by black writers has been taken from such capable writers of humor as Ted Poston, who has written extensively and humorously about his childhood in Hopkinsville, Kentucky; Langston Hughes, whose fictional character, Simple, talks naively but quite accurately on many facets of Negro urban life; and Jackie "Moms" Mabley, the television, radio, night club, and theater comedienne.

Humor has not been one of the main features of Negro creative writing, but some of the writers included in this unit have achieved a high degree of competence in this area, and young people of all races will profit from being exposed to their work.

"The Revolt of the Evil Fairies"
by Ted Poston

The setting for this story is Hopkinsville, Kentucky, the author's birthplace and the scene of his formative years. He began work as a newspaperman in 1928 on Negro weeklies and is now on the daily New York Post. His stories have often been anthologized.

This story is about the Booker T. Washington Colored Grammar School and its yearly dramatic production, "Prince Charming and the Sleeping Beauty." Although the story is extremely humorous, it reveals the traditional prejudices that were prevalent in some all-black schools years ago. Young students will probably miss many of the subtle nuances in the story, but it is so cleverly and humorously written that most will enjoy the age-old struggle between "good" and "bad"—this time in the form of little black sixth grade fairies.

"The Streets of Memphis"
by Richard Wright

Richard Wright was born on a plantation near Natchez, Mississippi, and spent his youth in Memphis, Tennessee. As a teenager, he moved to Chicago and worked at many menial jobs while perfecting his writing technique. Before he died in 1960, he wrote many books and became internationally famous. He also won a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Springarn Medal for achievement in the field of Negro interest.

"The Streets of Memphis," an excerpt from Wright's autobiography, tells of his fight for survival as a little black boy on the tough streets of Memphis. Young readers, especially boys, will rejoice with him as he fights off a gang of "toughies" and wins his right to the streets of Memphis.

"The Day the World Almost Came to An End"
by Pearl Crayton

This short humorous story is an excellent vehicle for giving young readers an insight into the religiously oriented lives of southern black people some years ago. It is told in the first person by a little twelve-year-old girl who in her own words tells us, "If you haven't had the world coming to an end on you when you're twelve years old and a sinner, you don't know how lucky you are!" While she was experiencing what to her was a terrifying event, the narrator could only think of it as a calamity, but in later years she came to the conclusion that this event was one of the real turning points in her life.

Mrs. Crayton, born in Louisiana in 1930, has written articles on pioneer Louisiana Negroes and the leading Negro citizens of the state.

"Simple on Dogs and Cats"
by Langston Hughes

Simple, the fictional character created by Langston Hughes, is said to be probably the most widely admired and beloved character of contemporary Negro literature. From his humble beginning in a column in the Chicago Defender, he found his way into books, radio, television, and the musical comedy stage. He has also been translated for European readers.

Simple, whose real name is Jesse B. Semple, is a naive hero. In the short story, "Simple on Dogs and Cats," Simple is concerning himself with the then popular fad of giving fancy names to dogs, the virtues of mutts over the "questionable" virtues of pedigreed dogs, and the population explosion of cats and dogs in hectic Harlem.

Langston Hughes wrote several books with Simple as the central character. They are Simple Speaks His Mind, Simple Takes a Wife, Simple Stakes a Claim, and The Best of Simple. Only The Best of Simple is still in print.

"Little Cindy Ella"
by Jackie "Moms" Mabley

"Little Cindy Ella," a take-off on the famous fairy tale, "Little Cinderella," tells what happens to a poor but very pretty little Negro girl when she is miraculously transformed into a beautiful white maiden and is caught at the stroke of twelve dancing with the president of the Ku Klux Klan at a big ball in a southern town.

Some of the terms included are White Citizen's Council, Ku Klux Klan, and Civil Rights Bill; they might have to be reviewed or explained to the class, but all in all, most young people will enjoy this humorous take-off on a well-known tale.

"Red Bonnet"
by Lindsay Patterson

Lindsay Patterson, who was born in Louisiana in 1937, went to college in Virginia and has lived in Mexico and Europe. In 1965 he received a fellowship to the MacDowell Colony to continue work on his first novel, Pierian Spring. His story "Red Bonnet" is set in the deep South, and the background material of the main plot permits young people, through the eyes of a little black boy, to see something of the relationship between white and black people a few generations ago. The story itself is a humorous account of an old, supposedly crippled woman who walks only when her conniving daughter is away from home. This story, although written in a humorous vein, is also a mystery, and perhaps the students can figure out or debate what eventually happens to the old lady and her beloved red bonnet.

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UNIT FIVE

BLACK HISTORY THROUGH POETRY

This unit is intended to show young readers that there are bridges linking the poetic efforts of early black poets to those of their modern counterparts; that the writings of early poets, although varying quite a bit in subject matter from that of modern poets, led almost inevitably to popular tone of poetry written by today's black poets.

Most students are somewhat familiar with the name of the Boston slave, Phillis Wheatley. Many are not aware that she was not the only slave writing poetry during the 1700's; none of these, however, could use their poetry as a means of protesting their bondage.

Paul Laurence Dunbar, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, wrote primarily about rural Negroes. His poetry, especially the dialectical, is rich with the speech patterns and religious and social life of these people.

By the mid-twenties the mood of the black man's poetry was for the most part one of rebellion and resentment. By reading such poems as "White Houses" by Claude McKay, one can sense the general mood of the period, although some of the most beautiful and lyrical poetry that the black man has produced and some of his best loved poems have come from this period.

Most poetry written by the young black poets of today concern themselves more and more with Negro urban life and the joys, sorrows, and frustrations encountered there.

Students as a rule enjoy reading poetry orally. Much of the poetry included in this list lends itself to choral reading. After studying and reading some of the modern poems in Black Out Loud, some of the students might want to try their hand at writing verse.

"To S. M., a Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works"
by Phillis Wheatley

Phillis Wheatley, a Negro slave girl born in Africa, was reared by a wealthy and cultured family in Boston. She knew very little about the realities of slavery, as she had led a very sheltered life. Phillis Wheatley was well versed in the classics, and her poems reflect her knowledge of Latin and mythology.

Students reading the poem, "To S. M., a Young African Painter on Seeing His Works," will probably find it difficult to relate to the formal language used by Phillis Wheatley. The poem, though, can be used to show that Phillis, although a slave, was a product of her environment and that the language of her poem reflects the classical heritage she was exposed to through her owners.

"We Wear the Mask"
"When Malindy Sings"
"Ere Sleep Comes Down to Soothe the Weary Eyes"
by Paul Laurence Dunbar

The poems here are representative of Paul Laurence Dunbar's creative efforts. His fame rests primarily on his poems written in Negro dialect. Dunbar, who wrote around the turn of the century, felt that the surest way for him to be heard was to use this medium. Much of the material and experiences that went along with this type of speech has been discarded, and along with it, the need for dialect as a medium of expression.

As Dunbar's poems "We Wear the Mask" and "Ere Sleep Comes Down to Soothe the Weary Eyes" will show, he also wrote effectively in conventional language. Classes might find it interesting to study the subject matter in dialectical poetry written by Dunbar and other early black poets and compare the subject matter with that of modern-day black poets.

"The Creation"
by James Weldon Johnson

James Weldon Johnson had a varied career. He was an educator; United States Consul to Venezuela and then to Nicaragua from 1906 to 1913; novelist; and poet. It is said that as a poet Johnson achieved his finest effects.

"The Creation," a Negro sermon from his book God's Trombones, re-creates the dignity and splendor of the old Negro sermon. It has often been memorized and dramatized quite effectively.

In 1900 he wrote "Lift Every Voice and Sing," for which his brother J. Rosamond Johnson composed the music. Before schools were integrated, this song, called the National Negro Anthem, was widely sung by black children throughout the nation.

"White Houses"
by Claude McKay

Claude McKay, from Jamaica, British West Indies, came to America in 1912 to attend Tuskegee Institute. After studying there and at Kansas State University, he went to New York just as Harlem was becoming the world metropolis for Negroes. At an early age he had published a volume of verse, and he continued writing in New York.

He was there during the turbulent post-World War I period when race riots were occurring in quick succession in many cities across the nation. As a poet, McKay belonged to the post-war group of black poets and was its most powerful voice, mostly a voice of rebellion at the condition of the Negroes in America during this period. His poem "White Houses" seems to sum up his feelings of defiance and desperation.

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
by Langston Hughes

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" was written when Langston Hughes was only eighteen years of age. He was leaving his mother in Cleveland and going to Mexico to be with his father. As the train was crossing the Mississippi River, he began thinking of what the river had meant to Negroes in the past. Then he began to think of other rivers in the black man's past: the Congo, the Niger, and the Nile in Africa. He says that the thought came to him: "I've known rivers," and from these thoughts came one of his most beautiful poems. It remained one of his favorite poems throughout his life. Through the reading and studying of this poem, the student should be able to incorporate some of the material he has studied in history classes.

"We Real Cool (The Pool Players Seven at The Golden Shovel)"
by Gwendolyn Brooks

"We Real Cool (The Pool Players Seven at The Golden Shovel)" is a short poem consisting of only eight lines by the well-known poetry and short story writer, Gwendolyn Brooks. Althought tersely written, it tells in no uncertain terms what can and often does happen to the school dropout.

Famous American Negro Poets
by Charlemae Rollins

Famous American Negro Poets by Charlemae Rollins should have a special appeal to young readers who are at all curious about the background and lives of some of the best-known black poets.

In her book Mrs. Rollins presents short biographies of such well-known poets as Phillis Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Arna Bontemps, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullens, Gwendolyn Brooks, and others. Along with these poets' biographies, she presents excerpts and complete poems from the authors' works; and in many cases she tells how the author came to write a certain poem.

Although this book does not contain many poems by present-day poets, it could be used as a vehicle for leading into the study of modern poetry by black poets.

Black Out Loud - An Anthology of Modern Poems by Black Americans
Edited by Arnold Adoff

Black Out Loud is a collection of modern poems that tell of the loves, hates, fears, and aspirations of blacks in present-day America. Most of the authors will not be familiar to the young reader, but some of the terms and words these poets use such as "Afro," "funky," "right on," "think black," "proud," and "angry" will be familiar to most of those reading this poetry.

These poems were not written specifically for young people, but they are easy to understand, as they reflect in verse form many of the issues that are being probed in our society today.

Poems from Black Africa
Edited by Langston Hughes

In compiling the book, Poems from Black Africa, Langston Hughes acknowledges the help he was given in editing, translating, and the gathering of materials by many persons.

Along with the awakened interest by many Americans in the African heritage of blacks in America, there is also a certain amount of interest in and curiosity about what present-day Africans are writing and thinking. The poems in this anthology, although not written expressly for young readers, do let them know that Africans, though many miles away, write about the same basic elements of life that we do. Even a cursory reading should do much to enhance a student's understanding of the people of the many nations in Africa.

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UNIT SIX

SONGS TO STEER BY

In the small book by Langston Hughes, Black Misery, written especially for young readers, Hughes in one instance has his little black protagonist saying, "Misery is when your white teacher tells the class that all Negroes can sing and you can't even carry a tune." Contrary to Hughes' little hero's dilemma, the black man in America, as a race, has a long musical heritage that is uniquely his own.

Studies have shown that there are African as well as European elements in the songs of the American Negro. It is said that in the work songs the former element prevails and that the blues and workaday religious songs partake of both while the formal spirituals lean toward Europe.

The songs included in this unit are samples from the work songs, street cries, blues, ballads, and spirituals.

Spirituals

"Oh, Mary, Don't You Weep"
"Go Tell It on the Mountain"
"Steal Away"

The spirituals, sometimes called sorrow songs, are the expression of a supreme belief in immortality that goes beyond any religious creeds or dogma. In the old days, the slaves had no way of protesting against their fate without danger of being whipped or even killed except through their songs. So into the simple music and words of the spirituals went all the pent-up pain and sorrow of their bondage.

No explanation of the spirituals would be complete without some mention of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. This group of singers from the Fisk School, now known as Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, began touring America in quest of funds in 1871 and gained world-wide appreciation. They were able to raise thousands of dollars. The money was used to buy a new site for the college, a hill overlooking the city, and that is where Fisk University stands today. Several Louisville men have been members of this renowned group.

Blues

"Southern Blues"
"How Long Blues"
"Good Morning Blues"

Webster describes the "blues" as a type of Negro folk song characterized by minor harmony, slow jazz rhythm, and melancholy words. Nobody seems to know who made up the first blues, probably over a hundred years ago, but in 1910 W. C. Handy of Memphis wrote down on paper the words and notes of a blues. At that time this was considered backwoods music, river music, or bad people's music. No one except the Negro singers and creators of the blues paid much attention to these songs at first. But gradually this type of music drifted from the deep South to New York where the artists of Tin Pan Alley incorporated it into some of their styles of singing.

Today this type of music is still very much alive with such exponents as Joe Williams and Jimmy Rushing still carrying on the tradition.

Street Cries

"Sweet Potato Man"
"Crab Man"
"Watermelon Vendor's Cry"
"Cola Vendor's Cry"
"Oyster Man's Cry"

A little-known type of Negro folk song is that referred to as "street cries." These songs, while not musically important like the spiritual and the blues, are frequently amusing. They are the songs that are sung by the hucksters and vendors on the streets. Rather coarse in text, the street cries have never reached or been heard by the vast majority of Negroes but were often employed by vendors on the streets of South Carolina and Louisiana.

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Work Songs

"Pick A Bale of Cotton"
"South Carolina Chain Gang Song"
"Good Morning Captain"

The American Negro found much consolation in his music while at work. The slaves found songs for the rhythm of just about every labor. Whether working in the cotton or rice fields, on the levees, or swinging the hammer against the anvil in order to fashion the intricate iron patterns for the gracious old New Orleans balconies, the Negro produced songs to complement his feelings just as he had done with the spirituals.

As a result of this, another type of folk song also developed from slavery—the work song. At first, gangs of slaves sang these songs in the cotton fields or along the levees. When slavery was abolished, labor gangs inherited this tradition.

Ballads

"The Ballit of de Boll Weevil"
"John Henry"

Most literature anthologies for young readers contain at least a few American ballads. Whether cowboy, frontier, country or city ballad, all follow the ballad tradition in form and style. There are relatively few ballads of the city, but of these, "Frankie and Johnny" is probably the best known. It is estimated that there are more than a hundred "Frankie" songs, each with its own variations of words and music.

Of the two ballads listed in this unit, "The Ballit of de Boll Weevil" has enjoyed a certain amount of popularity, but "John Henry" probably rivals "Frankie and Johnnie" in its renown.

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UNIT SEVEN

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

Christmas is such a joyous season for most young people that invariably they associate Christmas with toys, gifts, Christmas trees, turkey, and large family gatherings. But many do not realize that this picture of Christmas does not hold true for all people.

Included in this unit, "Celebrating Christmas," is material taken from a wide range of Christmas experiences. An autobiographical account of how the slaves spent their Christmas; the fictional account of what happened to a modern-day artist when he painted a black madonna for a Christmas church celebration at a white church; and other accounts, will let students know that Christmas is and always has been a many-faceted celebration. A close reading and studying of this material should give depth to students' understanding of our most beloved holiday.

"New Relations and Duties"
by Frederick Douglass

This story, a true account taken from the life of Frederick Douglass, tells how the slaves spent their Christmas holidays, the days between Christmas day and New Year's day. Not all slaves spent their holidays the same. Douglass says, "We regarded this time as our own by the grace of our masters, and we therefore used it or abused it as we pleased." Douglass, always an industrious person, used his time wisely and tried to influence the other slaves to do so. "New Relations and Duties" is a very sober and enlightening account of what often took place during these days of celebration.

"Memories of Christmas"
by Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes, who led an amazingly colorful and eventful life, traveled to four continents and a number of islands while still a young man. In the account, "Memories of Christmas," the reader is provided an opportunity to share not only his recollections of Christmas as a child in Kansas, but also his recollections of some of the Christmases he spent abroad. This account includes Christmas in the Soviet Union, in the heart of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, and in Tashkent, where he spent some time with a colony of American Negro cotton chemists and

growers teaching the Asiatics how to raise cotton Alabama style. He gives memorable accounts of Christmas in Paris, Rotterdam, and Mexico. Although this is a rather short selection, the author's account is so vivid and well told that young readers will receive enjoyment and information from it.

"Santa Claus Is a White Man"
by John Henrik Clarke

John Henrik Clarke was born in Union Springs, Alabama, and grew up in Columbus, Georgia. He has lived in New York City since 1933. His stories, poems, and articles have been widely published in magazines and newspapers. He is the editor of three successful anthologies, Harlem, A Community in Transition; Harlem, U.S.A.; and American Negro Short Stories. The latter anthology could be used as a literature textbook for students, especially in high school. The Baltimore Sun reported that it would be hard to imagine a better or less violent primary text to recommend than this. The stories for the most part are neither bitter nor cynical.

Clarke's "Santa Claus Is a White Man" is not in his anthology, but it is a thought-provoking account of what happened to a poor little black boy in Louisiana on his way to spend twenty-five cents his mother had given him to buy Christmas presents. Santa Claus' reaction to a lynch mob that had engulfed the little boy should bring forth many lively discussions.

"The Legend of the Black Madonna"
by Margaret T. Applegarth

This short story, "The Legend of the Black Madonna," was written by Margaret T. Applegarth in 1925. It tells about a young black painter whose talents won for him a commission from a large church to create the design for a great stained glass window that was to be dedicated on Christmas morning. The young artist's heart was filled with hatred and mistrust from all the ills, real and imagined, that he felt society had heaped upon him. In a revengeful mood, he perpetrated what he intended to be an awful trick upon the white congregation of the large church that had commissioned him to do the work. But because of a miracle, the young black painter and the congregation learned a lesson in brotherly love and the true meaning of Christmas.

"Otto"
by Gwendolyn Brooks

This sensitively written poem, "Otto," by Gwendolyn Brooks is one that all young children, especially those in the lower socio-economic bracket, should read. It is about a young boy, who althought he doesn't get the things he is hoping for for Christmas, doesn't complain because he realizes how difficult it must be for his father, too, knowing that he was not able to get his son the presents that he wished for.

"Kid Stuff"
by Frank Horne

Frank Horne, born in New York City in 1899, had an early leaning toward writing, but it took some encouragement from others for him to do anything about it. He was quite an athlete; he won varsity letters as a track man, did the hundred yard dash in "10 flat," and the quarter mile in 51 seconds. It should interest students to know that athletic prowess and literary creativity can be compatible.

"Kid Stuff" is the type of poem young teenagers, especially boys, should be able to relate to. The idea behind the poem is that maybe there is something plausible, after all, about "three wise guys" chasing a star across a continent two thousand years ago.

"Under the Mistletoe"
by Countee Cullen

Countee Cullen, very precocious as a child, had won several important poetry prizes and gained a considerable reputation as a poet before he had finished school in New York. In the year that he finished at New York University, when he was but twenty-two, he published a volume of poems.

"Under the Mistletoe" is a very witty poem, with an epigrammatical quality. While the class reads it orally, a boy and girl might enjoy dramatizing it.

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